



**UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION 10**

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OFFICE OF
ECOSYSTEMS, TRIBAL AND
PUBLIC AFFAIRS

September 8, 2014

Mr. Anthony Boesen
Federal Highway Administration
530 Center Street NE, Suite 420
Salem, Oregon 97301

Ms. Amy Pfeiffer
ODOT Region 4
63055 N. Highway 97, Bldg M
Bend, Oregon 97701

Re: US 97 Bend North Corridor Project Final Environmental Impact Statement and Final Section 4(f) Evaluation. EPA Region 10 Project Number: 08-006-FHW

Dear Mr. Boesen and Ms. Pfeiffer:

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has reviewed the Final EIS for the US 97 Bend North Corridor Project. We are submitting comments in accordance with our responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act and Section 309 of the Clean Air Act.

We would like to commend FHWA and ODOT for an outstanding NEPA process and Final EIS for the US 97 Bend North Corridor Project. We are pleased that all issues identified as being unresolved in the Draft EIS have been successfully resolved, and that all of the comments and recommendations we submitted for the Draft EIS have received a thoughtful, thorough, and helpful response. A few of the highlights include:

- A 2011 traffic analysis to update the 2007 pre-economic recession analysis in the DEIS.
- A Preferred Alternative that modifies and improves the East DS2 Alternative in response to public and agency comments. The Preferred Alternative:
 - Incorporates an array of transportation system management and transportation demand management strategies;
 - Includes many bicycle-pedestrian improvements that provide non-motorized access throughout the project area, including separated multi-use paths along US 20 and US 97;
 - Maintains existing access to US 97 for disadvantaged populations and others with the 3rd Street signalized intersection and multi-use path connection;
 - Substantially decreases impacts to western juniper woodlands and shrub-steppe habitats, prime farmland and farmland of statewide importance, and acres of ground disturbance;
 - Avoids the need for exceptions to statewide planning goals;
 - Minimizes displacements and impacts to community cohesion.

- Completion of all identified MPO and local government planning actions/updates together with a discussion of how the transportation planning process and the proposed project comply with SAFETEA-LU Section 6001.
- Identification of sensitive receptors for mobile source air toxics in the area of potential impacts and refinements to air quality construction mitigation measures.
- Decreased construction activity within wellhead protection areas.
- Consideration of impacts with respect to children's health and safety per Executive Order 13045.

We also appreciate the clarity of the Final EIS, which facilitates review by presenting new information in orange print – a practice we hope will be broadly adopted.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the NEPA process for the US 97 Bend North Corridor Project and, in particular, for providing an informative site visit in July, 2013. If we can be of further assistance, please contact me at (206) 553-1601 or via electronic mail at reichgott.christine@epa.gov, or contact Elaine Somers of my staff at (206) 553-2966 or via electronic mail at somers.elaine@epa.gov.

Sincerely,

//s//

Christine B. Reichgott, Manager
Environmental Review and Sediment Management Unit